

Digital Storytelling: From Fairy Tales to the Big Screen

Melissa Johnson

Introduction

My unit will explore digital storytelling through a variety of media. Through this unit, students in grades 9 through 12 in Graphic Design courses at the Wallin ILC School in Colonial School District will explore various written work. Students will use their experiences and exploration to create their own stories and images. Students will read children's books, graphic novels and comic books; novels (fiction and non-fiction) watch movies, advertising and more. Their reading and research will allow for conversations around plot, character, symbolism, foreshadowing, and more story elements. Illustration and the connection of words and pictures will also be a focus. Students will explore art and graphic design as a visual language using programs like Word, Photoshop, iMovie and more to tell stories both written and through images. By teaching our students to break down meaning and purpose through images and text they will be visually literate and better able to understand the world around them including graphics, photographs, pictures and text in any subject area. In history, students will have the skills not only to read a text, but also to contextualize it with the images provided and make a connection between the two. In English, students can make inferences between text and illustrations. Having a deeper understanding of symbolism and foreshadowing in the story and any supporting images provided. In science, students can follow directions and steps of experiments using their visual literacy to see the connection between written and visual steps. In math students can look at graphs, diagrams, and problems with a conceptual eye for what the image is showing and asking. These skills spread across subjects and into a persons understanding and interpretation of what we see and do on a daily basis.

Demographics

The Wallin School is located in New Castle, Delaware and serves approximately 135 students from 6th through 12th grade. Our school offers special programming for students in the Colonial School District. The programs are an Intensive Learning Center for special education students in grades 6-12 who have not been successful in their home schools due to a history of school related behavior problems. The middle school alternative program serves general education students in grades 7th and 8th that have seriously violated the district's code of conduct. The Credit Recovery program serves students in grades 9-12 that have been unsuccessful in earning credits towards graduation

at William Penn High School. The Adult Integration program is designed to improve employment and post high school outcomes for students with mild to moderate disabilities, ages 18-21, which have completed their high school education but have elected to continue their schooling.

Student ethnicity is 53% African American, 2% Asian, 18% Hispanic/Latino, and 26% Caucasian. Our diverse population and small school enrollment allows us to personalize our children's educational experiences. Almost 50% of the student population comes from low income and poverty level households. The Wallin School is a Title I school and all students receive free breakfast and lunch. Over 50% of the students are identified as special education and receive various services and supports based on their Individualized Education Plans (IEP). Many of our students live in urban areas with high rates of crime and violence.

Wallin School has rigorous academic standards and opportunities for students to participate in the arts and provide the framework for meeting each child's individual needs. We provide small class sizes, on average 11 students per class. There are paraprofessionals in many classrooms for extra support allowing for more one on one instruction and IEP implementation. My classes generally have less than 10 students in them. My graphic design courses have a maximum enrollment of 8 students. This maximum is because students use Macintosh computers with specialized software, such as Adobe Creative Suite 6, and we currently only have 8 computers. The small setting is often required by their IEPs (Individual Learning Plans) and allow more attention and guidance.

Rationale

The world around us is filled with images. From the time we get up and brush our teeth until we lay our head back on our pillows we are bombarded with images, pictures, advertising, graphics, computers and phones. In our fast paced, technological world we see so many images everyday, but do we really look at them and understand them. It is increasingly important that we can understand the graphics and imagery we see everyday. Images are used to give us information like when to cross the road safely or caution when something is dangerous. We learn these symbols from a young age before we can read, but reading an image is just like reading a story. We have to look closely and figure out what is being communicated but instead of words we have to look at the lines, shapes, and colors to figure out what is being said. If we can teach our students to break down meaning and purpose through images and text they will be visually literate and better able to understand the world around them.

Through this unit, students will explore visual communication and the connections between images and text. As children we begin our education as visual learners whether we are learning the names of animals or our ABC's. Storybooks teach us lessons, morals,

and basic skills through fairy tales, nursery rhymes, and stories both fictional and non-fictional. But it is the connections we as children make between the words spoken and the images that coincide with them, that give us a deeper understanding about what those words mean and why their context and placement makes a difference in their meaning.

They say “a picture is worth a 1000 words” and that is what I want my students to explore. The power of illustration to tell a story and add to it’s meaning and affect how people understand the words they are reading. The power of words to allow us imagine and picture the characters and setting in our minds. How symbolism and small details in a story or image can have significance in a story; and the power of those details to foreshadow and set up events to come. Pictures have no boundaries. A photograph or graphic can communicate across socioeconomic background, geographic location, age, sex, race, and language, sending the same message.

Objective

- Use technology to create illustrations and visual representations of stories, plots, and characters
- Create images that communicate ideas using the elements and principles of design
- Observe and understand symbolism in text and images
- Use symbolism to express meaning and ideas
- Use simple to complex texts to study characters and events
- Describe and understand character, setting, and plot
- Use storytelling and illustration to gain insight and understanding of text
- Make connections between the text and images
- Responding to Text Based Questions through Technology

Teaching Strategies

I will need to incorporate a variety of strategies to differentiate my lessons and reach all learners. The strategies I use will serve as an opportunity for formative assessment and a check for understanding among my students.

Graphic Organizers

Scholars will use a variety of graphic organizers to help them organize their thoughts and ideas throughout the unit. Students will create both paper and digital organizers. There is a connection between writing and reading. I have seen it as a classroom teacher and hearing stories and ideas throughout seminar I can see the connection more than ever. Students will work on improving their writing throughout this unit as we study storytelling and visual communication. The interactive organizers are also great for my struggling learners. Being able to model how to use the graphic organizers in a digital and

interactive way is beneficial to helping my struggling writers who may have processing delays or low reading abilities. By organizing and rewriting new information into charts and both visual and written expressions, students are using the information in a new way and have a reference they can use throughout the project and unit.

Responding to Text Based Questions through Technology

Technology plays an integral role in the 21st century classroom. Students will be able to answer their text based questions via the class website, through the class blog. Students will also be asked to create Google documents through their Google drives to create text and image based documents and submit them to me via the “share” feature. The Google application allows students access to work in school and at home or any location they have access to the Internet and a device. Google documents allow live editing and I can answer questions, chat, and make suggestions as students work in class or even after hours if students work at home. Google documents will also allow students to use the research tool to cite sources and collect visuals and information from a variety of places.

Collaborative Learning Groups

Students will learn many strategies while working in collaborative learning groups. They will use the talk and share strategy during discussions to turn to their partners and have rich conversations. Students become stronger writers when they are able to share and to have discussions about what they are reading and writing. This peer editing and critiquing also allows students to find new ideas and share their varied knowledge and backgrounds. Collaborative learning groups will give all scholars another opportunity to strengthen our classroom community by their social interactions. They will use post it notes in many of their collaborative learning groups to record information. Post its will be placed in notebooks, wall charts, and reviewed in whole group to share and discuss small group discoveries and information. The collaborative learning groups are interactive and students in the classroom will also have opportunities to work on their close reading strategies. This strategy focuses on students, not just reading, but really understanding what they are reading through questioning, rereading, pulling out details and citing specific parts of text that they are getting or creating their answers from.

Reflective Journaling and Portfolio

Students will also use Google drive as a way to save, review, reflect on, and document their work. These portfolios and journals serve as an archive for their work. It also gives me, as the teacher, and opportunity to formatively and summatively assess students as they work through the unit.

Visual retellings will help scholars use drawings to discuss a piece of text.

Scholars will base their drawings on story elements. Students will share out their drawings, critique and discuss. Research shows when scholars have opportunities to work collaboratively and talk about what they are going to create they become stronger writers and artists. Story elements would include the following: characters, setting, plot, foreshadowing, and resolution.

Critique

In the middle and end of each lesson students will critique their own work and their classmates. Critiquing allows students to make detailed analysis and assessment of their work or the work of someone else. It is an opportunity for students to share and get ideas on how to make their work better. Since graphic design is about visual communication, critique is also a chance to see if the purpose and idea behind the art is being understood by the audience, or in this case their peers and fellow students. Critique will be done as whole class, small group, one on one, and teacher and student. Some previous teaching on how to critique should defiantly be provided. I will also provide some worksheets and guides throughout the critique process and students will have a project rubric so they have a clear understanding of project requirements and how their projects are being assessed.

Classroom Activities

I will begin my unit with Project 1: “The Other Side of the Story”, using fairy tales and children’s books. These will be more accessible, engaging, and understood by my demographic of student. With both a high population of special education and intensive learning students this would be a more comfortable starting place and hopefully also have some emotional and memory connections for students.

In Project 2: “Harry Potter creatures: Words come to life”, students will explore their imaginations and the use of description in the “Harry Potter, Words come to Life”. Students will read an excerpt from *Harry Potter and Prisoner of Azkaban*, and imagine what the ‘Hippogryph’ described in the reading looks like. Students will draw what they think the animal looks like and then watch and clip from the movie. Student will then create his or her own animal hybrid using Photoshop CS6.

In Project 3: “Illustration, Telling a story with a picture” Students will move to book cover illustration and explore symbolism and meaning by recreating a book cover in Adobe InDesign. Students may be given the option to redesign an album cover or movie poster depending on the level of engagement and student abilities. Students choosing to do an album cover or movie poster redesign must still use and explore symbolism and story telling through images. Students will also explore typography and the principles of design through their cover redesign. Students will finish the project by creating their own handmade book using some of the techniques we learned in seminar.

The unit will conclude with Project 4: “Advertising and IMovie: Make me want to buy it!” Students will look at advertising and commercial use of story telling. Through looking at novels/scripts and create a writing piece they will have to bring to life in movie form. Students will use previous experiences and knowledge to create their own advertisement campaigns and commercials, effectively displaying their learning, new skills, and knowledge.

Project 1: “*The Other Side of the Story*”

I will begin the Unit with students finding a favorite book or story from their childhood. Students will rewrite the story from the perspective of another character. Students will read *The Other Side of the Story: Fairy Tales with a Twist*, for inspiration. Class will pair share or work in a collaborative group and discuss their ideas before writing a blog post about their book of choice and whose perspective they will write their story from. Student will then begin writing in Google docs and ‘sharing’ their story with me allowing me to live edit and chat with them as they work in class or at home. Once student have finished their stories and followed the editing process they will create a cover illustration for their new story. Scholars can choose to create a computer made illustration or a hand drawn image. Students would be introduced to illustration, character, plot, point of view and perspective though the various steps of the project. Finally, students will create hand made books using some of the techniques introduced in seminar class. Students will layout and print words and images to create an actual book with their rewritten story.

Project 2: “ Harry Potter Creatures: words come to life”

In this lesson students will read, listen, and discuss Harry Potter. I like the idea of using Harry Potter because it is something I expect all students to recognize and most likely have seen the movies. I will begin by activating their knowledge through leading questions such as “What are some of the main characters?” “What is the plot of Harry Potter?”, and “ Why do you think Harry Potter became so successful and famous?”. I will read an excerpt from Harry Potter where the Hippogriff is introduced for the first time. I will leave out the name of the animal and ask students to close their eyes and imagine what the animal being described looks like. Once I have finished reading student can sketch or search Google and try to find an image of the Hippogriff.

We will then discuss how writers use words and imagery to create stories that people can connect to. Harry Potter is interesting for the plot, the characters, and the wonder and magic that happen within it; but what students often miss is that a story still needs to be based in reality. The Hippogriff is a combination of multiple animals that we, as the reader or viewer recognize. This makes it so that we, the reader can picture the fantastical animal and believe it that is part bird, part horse.

Students will now create their own animal hybrid using Adobe Photoshop CS6. Student must combine the attributes and features of at least animals using photographs found through proper Google searching. Students will then cut, blend, crop, etc. using Photoshop tools to create their Creature. Students will then use Google Docs to write a one-paragraph description of their animal. Once animals are complete the other graphic design classes will be asked to match the correct description to the corresponding creature creation. Students will be able to review basic vocabulary like terms such as nouns and adjectives while also gaining some first hand understanding of why descriptive language can be so powerful to a writer and reader.

Project 3: “ Illustration: Telling a story in a picture”

Illustration is a powerful tool. It should not just be an image of the main character of a story, but it should use symbols and images to foreshadow the storyline and ideas contained within the book. Students will explore how to tell a story using a picture by choosing to redesign a book cover, album cover, or movie poster. Students will begin by choosing a story. The class will read about and discuss symbolism, foreshadowing, and look at early illustrations. We will then revisit some of our fairy tale stories by looking at the cover illustration. I will ask students to hypothesis what the story is about based on the cover art. Students will explain and discuss their thoughts. Asking students questions like “Why do you think that?”, “What causes you to make that connection?”, “Can you tell the emotion and feeling of the story?” Once students have a clear grasp on how illustrators use symbols and images as a way to communicate details of a story students will create a Google document and will write a 2-paragraph synopsis of the story, album/artist, or movie they have chosen. They must also add a picture of the current book, album, or movie cover in their document. Students will “share” the document to me through their school assigned Google drive account. They will already have experience with this from previous assignments.

Once students complete and submit their synopsis I will introduce a PowerPoint introducing key vocabulary, such as composition, typography, and layout. We will also address aesthetics and audience. Students will fill out a graphic organizer as we do the PowerPoint so they can refer to it as they sketch and create their illustrations. Once we have completed the PowerPoint and discussions scholars will begin the redesign worksheet. The worksheet will help students to plan and explore their ideas. Asking questions like “What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current cover?”, “Why did you choose to redesign this cover?”, “What are your ideas to redesign it and why do you think yours will be better?”. The worksheet will ask students to explain and support their answers throughout. There will also be a space provided to sketch ideas for their final artwork.

As students complete their worksheets they will meet with me individually to discuss their choices and ideas. Once I have approved their sketch, students will begin creating

their final product on the classroom Apple MAC computers. They will be using Adobe InDesign to create their work (Adobe Photoshop or Illustrator or a combination of all three programs could also be used for this but, InDesign is specifically for layout and design.) Students will have prior experience working in the program but will need some review, support, and demonstrations of how to do specific things like adding text and importing or “placing” images. Students can take photos, collect images online through Google images or stock sites, create their own drawing digitally or on paper and then scan them, or any combination of these. Students will combine images and text to create a new, redesigned cover with the appropriate measurements and resolution depending on the media. Students will have peer critiques and one on one teacher critiques throughout the creation process with each student have at least one of each. When the scholars have completed their work they will save as PDF’s, upload to Google drive, and “share” their files with me through email.

The project will conclude with a class critique. The Critique will allow for students to guess and discuss what the plot line or story is behind the illustration. Once students have discussed the artist of the illustration will read their synopsis to the class. This will give teacher and students a clear idea if their symbols and message is being communicated by their completed artwork.

Project 4: “Advertising and IMovie: Make me want to buy it!”

It seems as if every day a new piece of technology emerges to make things more accessible to the everyday American, to the everyday citizen of the world. Phones have the ability to surf the Internet, and there is an “app” for everything. The click of a button can figuratively take anyone anywhere. My students are used to this world but most do not realize that the technology they use everyday is being used to sell them services, products and more. Commercials and advertisements use storytelling, emotion, and symbols to make us want to buy their products. In order to be an actively analytical member of this audience and therefore evaluate the effect of every gimmick and ploy, my students need the tools to critically analyze the pervasive and persuasive advertisements that bombard them.

There are many forms of advertisements: television commercials; print advertisements in newspapers and magazines; online advertisements on social networks or on the sidebars of favorite websites, those annoying commercials before you can watch a You Tube video or listen to your Pandora station. Advertisements have become more pervasive in other genres of entertainment since it became possible for the audiences to fast forward and skip through them.

Whether or not they all view the same genre of advertisement is irrelevant; this project will focus on television advertisements, and I will provide my students with guiding questions and activities for how to analyze rhetoric, logical fallacies, and the language of

advertisements within a commercial. At the end of the unit, I want my students to not only better recognize and evaluate the strategies of television advertisements, but also be able to assess whether or not the techniques they have recognized persuade or dissuade them from purchasing the product or service. Culminating project involves the students' creating their own advertisement campaigns, effectively displaying their own manipulation of the techniques, use of story telling, illustration and symbolism and application of multiple applications and skills developed throughout the unit and semester.

Resources

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Appendix A

State and National Standards

DSS.VA

Standard 1

Students will be able to select and use media, techniques, and processes to create works of art to communicate meaning.

Standard 3

Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas. Recognizing that the prospective content for works of visual art come from a variety of sources.

Standard 5

Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of student work and the work of others. Recognizing that reflection, assessment, and refinement are key steps in the process of creating visual art.

Standard 6

Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines. Recognizing that visual art is an integral component of a comprehensive education. The ability to convey ideas visually and the skills necessary to understand, respond to, and talk about visual images enable students to demonstrate complete literacy.

CCSS.ELA

Literacy.RL.4.2: Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Literacy.RL.4.3 Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

Literacy.RL.4.7

Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.

Appendix B

Vocabulary:

Composition

An orderly arrangement of elements using the principles of design

The principles of design help you to carefully plan and organize the elements of art so that you will hold interest and command attention. This is sometimes referred to as visual impact.

In any work of art there is a thought process for the arrangement and use of the elements of design. The artist who works with the principles of good composition will create a more interesting piece of art it will be arranged to show a pleasing rhythm and movement. The center of interest will be strong and the viewers will not look away, instead, they will be drawn into the work. A good knowledge of composition is essential in producing good artwork. Some artists today like to bend or ignore these rules and therefore are experimenting with different forms of expression. We think that composition is very important. The following will assist you in understanding the basics of a good composition:

Elements of Design

Line - is a mark on a surface that describes a shape or outline. It can create texture and can be thick and thin. Types of line can include actual, implied, vertical, horizontal, diagonal and contour lines.

Color - refers to specific hues and has 3 properties, Chroma, Intensity and Value. The color wheel is a way of showing the chromatic scale in a circle using all the colors made with the primary triad. Complimentary pairs can produce dull and neutral color. Black and white can be added to produce tints.

Texture - is about surface quality either tactile or visual. Texture can be real or implied by different uses of media. It is the degree of roughness or smoothness in objects.

Shape - is a 2-dimensional line with no form or thickness. Shapes are flat and can be grouped into two categories, geometric and organic.

Form - is a 3-dimensional object having volume and thickness. It is the illusion of a 3-D effect that can be implied with the use of light and shading techniques. Form can be viewed from many angles.

Value - is the degree of light and dark in a design. It is the contrast between black and white and all the tones in between. Value can be used with color as well as black and white. Contrast is the extreme changes between values.

Space - refers to variations in the perspective, and proportions of objects, lines or shapes. There is a variation of sizes in space of objects either real or imagined. (some sources list Proportion/Scale as a Principle of Design)

These elements are used to create the Principles of Design. Principles are the results of using the Elements. When you are working in a particular format (size and shape of the work surface) the principles are used to create interest, harmony and unity to the elements that you are using. You can use the Principles of design to check your composition to see if it has good structure.

Principles of Compositional Design

The principles of design are the recipe for a good work of art. The principles combine the elements to create an aesthetic placement of things that will produce a good design.

Center of interest - is an area that first attracts attention in a composition. This area is more important when compared to the other objects or elements in a composition. This can be by contrast of values, more colors, and placement in the format.

Balance - is a feeling of visual equality in shape, form, value, color, etc. Balance can be symmetrical or evenly balanced or asymmetrical and un-evenly balanced. Objects, values, colors, textures, shapes, forms, etc., can be used in creating a balance in a composition.

Harmony - brings together a composition with similar units. If your composition was using wavy lines and organic shapes you would stay with those types of lines and not put in just one geometric shape.

Contrast - offers some change in value creating a visual discord in a composition. Contrast shows the difference between shapes and can be used as a background to bring objects out and forward in a design. It can also be used to create an area of emphasis.

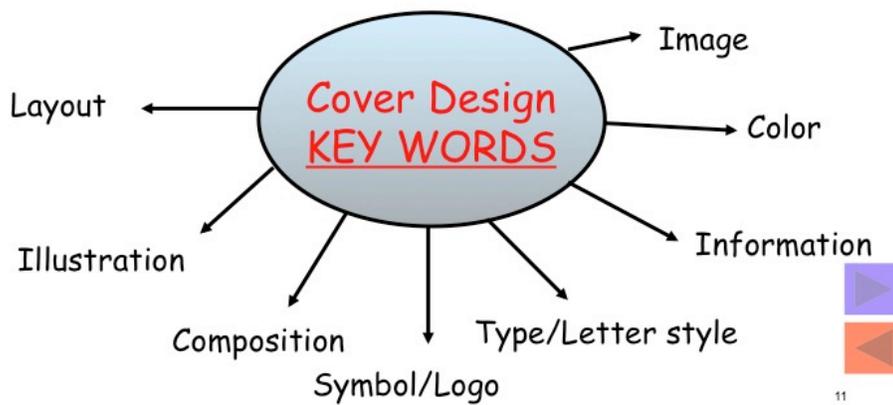
Directional Movement - is a visual flow through the composition. It can be the suggestion of motion in a design as you move from object to object by way of placement and position. Directional movement can be created with a value pattern. It is with the placement of dark and light areas that you can move your attention through the format.

Rhythm - is a movement in which some elements recur regularly. Like a dance it will have a flow of objects that will seem to be like the beat of music.

Appendix C

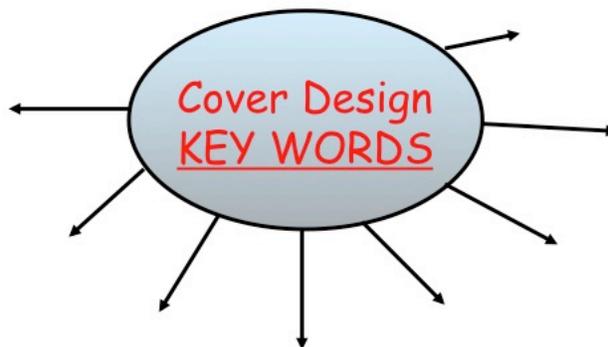
Graphic Organizers

□ Vocabulary



Vocabulary Graphic Organizer

□ Key Words



LFS Unit Plan

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ESSENTIAL QUESTION (S) for the UNIT

Why is point of view so important to our understanding of something? How do I create images that express emotions or ideas? How do I use technology to illustrate a story or theme? How is symbolism used in writing and images to convey information? What is a plot? Why are character and setting important to a story? How can I gain a better understanding of an image or story? How do illustrators create a connection between images and words? Why is symbolism important to artists and writers? How can I use descriptive language to illustrate through words? How do images influence us? How does advertising use storytelling tools?

CONCEPT A

Point of View: The Other side of the Story

CONCEPT B

Illustration: Words come to life/Images that tell a story

CONCEPT C

Advertising: Persuasive images and text

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ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS C

How do images influence us?
How does advertising use storytelling tools?

VOCABULARY A

Illustration, character, plot/story line, point of view, perspective, composition, layout, text, font,

VOCABULARY B

Noun, adjective, descriptive language, illustration, symbolism, imagination, composition, typography,

VOCABULARY C

Persuasion, Manipulation, techniques, story telling, illustration and symbolism, analyze,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/MATERIAL/TEXT/FILM/RESOURCES

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